



August, 2017



**Loving on Empty: The Energy of Caregiving** by Mike Verano

*I loved this article because he really nailed it. I have seen this so much and experienced it, too.*

Through my practice as a psychotherapist and my role as a caregiver support group leader, I have met many people who describe an experience that I only recently have been able to name. This experience, which I witnessed first-hand as my wife and I found ourselves in supportive roles related to a chronic illness, has to do with two essential life forces operating at the same time.

I have named the experience *exhaustlessness*, being both exhausted and restless at the same time. I realize now that this is what I see on the faces of the caregivers who come to me for professional guidance. It is the look that says, “There’s so much to do and so little time to do it that the only thing I can do is to keep moving.” The physical manifestation is like taking a sleeping pill and an energy drink at the same time. The feeling of constant motion comes from the awareness that there always seems to be something else that can be done. The exhaustion comes from the exertion of, not just physical, but mental, emotional and spiritual energies.

In a purely physiological sense, this is a perfect storm; the collision of two powerful systems whose combined impact can feel like an emotional hurricane. The unleashing of this full-force gale of stress would, under different circumstances, leave one depleted and empty. Paradoxically, it also becomes the very fuel that gives one the wherewithal to make that trip to see the loved one despite eyes that are as heavy as the heart. It speeds up the thinking process that allows the multi-tasks of caregiving to be expertly juggled despite learning as you go. It fends off sleep as one sits bedside, ever watchful of a loved one’s every move.

The reason that *exhaustlessness* does not come with the Surgeon General’s warning of “Dangerous to health” is, I believe, due to the fact that it essentially arises out of a movement of profound love. Unrestricted caregiving runs the risk of burnout when the awareness of personal limits is ignored and exceeded. The heart-centered focus of *exhaustlessness*, on the other hand, provides a return on the investment of selfless compassion as the illusion of separation dissolves. The giver and receiver are one; we get what we give.

This is why it can be so hard to convince caregivers to slow down and why they often look sideways at anyone who tells them that they have to take care of themselves first. At a very deep level, the level where we are all connected, they are taking care of themselves as they move reflexively toward the needs of a loved one who is suffering. The well that feeds this force is unlimited, which is why many caregivers seem to perform miracles in their acts of service. It is the human body that has its limits and will, at times, need to drink from the same well.

It's not surprising, then, that many of the caregivers I see are not looking for permission to slow down, but confirmation that it's okay to continue on. Increasingly, I find myself leaning toward helping them see the forces at work within themselves and move in accord with their inner wisdom. Finally, I ask that they allow trusted others to shoulder some of the burdens that come while living in a state of *exhaustlessness*; a state that, like all others, will also pass in time.

Source: Caregiver.com, June 22, 2017



## **Water, Water Everywhere!**

*When you read over and over, "Conserve Water", that doesn't mean that we should not drink the water at hand. Recently I found this article written by an author friend, Vickie Tiede. As I'm writing this newsletter, I am thirsty. This means I'm on the dehydrated side because when you begin to feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated. I'm going to get myself a nice cool drink of water now.~Karen*

We often hear about the need to drink 8 glasses of water a day, but has anyone ever explained why to you? Water is a critical component of your body. It helps remove toxins and other unhealthy substances that are stored in fat cells. Your body isn't able to store water, so it is crucial to stay well-hydrated in order to help your organs and body systems function properly. When we aren't properly hydrated, our bodies become less efficient. In addition, we might feel tired or irritable, we are less likely to exercise, and more likely to overeat.

If you struggle to get enough water in each day, you are not alone. But you can do it! Staying hydrated is a habit of health that gets easier over time. I encourage you to set goals for drinking water. Having a glass of water first thing in the morning is a great way to start the day. You can set alarms on your phone for an easy reminder to drink another glass of water each hour throughout the day. If you're not a big fan of water in general, you can try infusing your water with fruit or mint to add a little flavor.

Here are some of the great benefits of drinking enough water:

- \* It's calorie free, but helps you feel full and satisfied.
- \* It keeps you from overeating. Studies have shown that when we feel hungry, 30 percent of the time our bodies are actually signaling for water.
- \* It facilitates the removal of toxins such as pesticides and preservatives from your cells.
- \* It prevents dehydration as your body eliminates excess salt and water from a diet high

in processed food.

- \* It minimizes or eliminates fatigue, lack of energy, headaches, and unclear thinking.
- \* It speeds up metabolism. A recent study showed that drinking two 8-ounce glasses of cold water increased metabolic rate by 30 percent for 90 minutes.
- \* It helps your liver convert fat to energy.
- \* It compensates for the loss of glycogen stores as you lose weight.



## **5 Essential Fitness Rules for Older Adults** by K. Eleisha Fetters,

[silversneakers.com](http://silversneakers.com), June 2, 2017

Part 2: (continued from last month's newsletter)

### **Rule #3: You Need More Endurance Than You Think**

If you want to be able to play tag with your grandkids without getting winded or needing to take a break, adding cardiovascular exercise to your fitness routine is vital.

"One of the best forms of cardiovascular exercise for older adults is walking," Anderson says. Not only does it get your heart rate up and help cut your risk of cardiovascular disease, but it does so in an incredibly functional way—training your body in a way that closely mimics your daily activities.

If you're new to walking workouts, Anderson recommends starting with five to 10 minutes of light walking three to four times per week. Gradually work up to 20-30 minutes of brisk walking five times per week.

### **Rule #4: Better Balance Helps Keep You Out of the ER**

The unfortunate reality is that your risk of falling—and hip fractures or head injuries that result—increases as you age. About 7.8 million older adults visit the emergency room (ER) each year because of falls, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And more than 800,000 are hospitalized because of an injury from a fall.

Good news: Strength training and weight-bearing cardio workouts (like walking!) help lower your risk of taking a tumble. You can protect yourself even more by working on your balance.

"A good balance exercise to start with is the single-leg stand," says Anderson. It strengthens your base of support and fine-tunes the ability of your proprioceptive nerve fibers to determine your body's positioning in space, which is key for improving your balance and coordination.

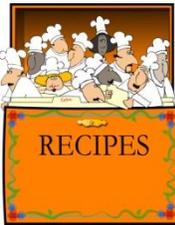
To perform a single-leg stand, hold a rail or heavy piece of furniture for support. Lift one leg just above the floor to stand on one leg. Try to hold that position for 30 seconds, using your arms for balance as little as possible without letting go, then switch legs. Perform 3 times on each leg once per day.

## **Rule #5: Low Impact Doesn't Have to Mean Low Intensity**

For older adults who have osteoporosis or joint pain, high-impact exercises such as jumping and running are often contraindicated or not recommended. However, that doesn't mean you can't—or shouldn't—break a real sweat during your workouts. "Some people think that just because they shouldn't perform high-impact exercises, that they shouldn't perform high-intensity activities," Freytag says. "That's simply not true."

Your heart health is a huge factor in whether high-intensity exercise is right for you. Talk to your doctor to get the go-ahead.

Even if you're not ready to go from 0 to 60, you can still pick up the intensity by adding bursts of harder or faster exercise to your usual workout. So, if you usually walk, you can mix in periods of faster walking or jogging. Or on the recumbent bike, you can mix in periods of faster pedaling.



### **RECIPE CORNER**

#### **Creamy Chicken Lasagna**

*I just tried this last night and it was sooo good. I think I can make it even easier the next time, but it will be your choice. I got this from Allrecipes.com, and we really loved it.*

3 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves (*I think you could use canned shredded chicken. You would need approx. 3 cups.*)

6 uncooked lasagna noodles

1 cube chicken boullion

½ cup hot water

1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened

1 ½ cup mozzarella cheese

1 (26 ounce) jar spaghetti sauce

### **MEDITATION TIME**



The phone call comes. Hard news on the other end of the line. I listen and nod. By the time I hang up I feel a weight on my shoulders, like it all depends on me. I begin to worry. *This is what I can do, isn't it?* I can carry this around like a dog with an old bone. I can gnaw and twist, bury it and dig it up again. Surely this will be helpful, certainly this will save the day.

But into that place of fear there comes a God-whisper in my heart, "*Your worry cannot change the world, only I can.*"

Luke 2:25 says, "*Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?*"

Who of us by worrying can make the prodigal come home, the marriage be restored, the meeting go well, the weight come off, the lights come on, the kids stay safe, the wrong be undone, the project turn out right?

Worry is seductive because it feels like control. If we are worrying then we must be taking action. We must be turning the tide. But this is only a distraction and deception. It's a shiny object for us to chase to keep us from going to the One who can actually get it done.

When I realize this it doesn't feel like a rebuke; it feels like a relief. Jesus, in all His gentleness and kindness, His extravagant mercy and care, has taken the boulder from my hands and said, "*It doesn't depend on you.*" As I picture this I see the scars on His own palms, hear His voice on the cross saying, "*It is finished.*"

Isn't that what we really want to know? That someone is taking care of it, of them, of the situation, the circumstance, the thing that makes us make our pillow soggy with salty tears. This

is what God says He will do. He will look out for the sparrows with their wispy feathers and fragile bones. And for us too, with our tender hearts and glass lives.

*And even when the worst comes, when everything shatters, He can make it (and us) whole again.*

After the call I sit on the edge of my bed and listen to a song, headphones in my ears, hands folded on my lap. I whisper, “*God, I release this person I love to You.*” I add more words, requests, and hopes. I will say this again in the kitchen. In the car. As I sit in a coffee shop. Because it takes more than one time to win the battle against worry. It’s an ongoing choice, one we falter with often. This is alright because Jesus understands what it is to be human.

*What frees our hearts isn’t worry; it’s worship.* In other words, taking all the hard things to Someone who cares for us. Choosing to trust and let go. Believing through the blood, sweat and tears He will mysteriously work it all together for good.

Here’s what we can rest in today: The only One who has ever been able to bear the weight of the world on His shoulders is still strong and loving enough to carry all that concerns us too.

XOXO

Holley Gerth, Coffee for your Heart blog